
Town of Berlin

Department of Economic Development

February 26, 2023

Environment Committee

RE: Governor's Bill 6664

Senator Lopes, , Representative Gresko, Senator Hochadel, Representative Palm, Senator Harding, Representative Callahan and Esteemed Members of the Environment Committee

My name is Chris Edge and I am the Economic Development Director for the Town of Berlin, and am speaking today concerning Governor's Bill 6664 – An Act Managing Waste and Creating A Waste Authority

I believe that the intention of this bill is to find answers to the issues we all face now with the huge amount of waste created in our state and few places to put it. Bill 6664 creates another Authority that will be run, managed, and overseen by the State of Connecticut. An Authority, by nature, should be one that has the vision and ability to find and implement solutions with a degree of expertise and speed. The Connecticut Waste Authority, which may sound good on paper, may be nothing more than a rehash of MIRA. As stated in the bill, the makeup of the Authority will have little or no input from the private sector, who has been handling waste successfully for generations. This does not make a lot of sense.

In addition, I am not sure why we are trying to create something new for items that now fit within our municipal curbside pickup programs. In Section 1 (6 and 8) it includes food containers, foil and wraps, bags, boxes, straws, utensils, plates, bowls, cups, party supplies, newsprint and inserts, magazines and catalogs, paper use for copying, writing, or other general uses, telephone directories, flyers, brochures and booklets. Later in the bill in Section 6 it speaks of a few more including cardboard, glass, food and beverage containers, metal food and beverage containers, newspapers and plastic food and beverage containers, which are also handled by curbside pick-up and processed in partnership with private sector providers. To show how the private sector is looking for and investing in solutions, during COVID a firm in Berlin spent over \$25,000,000 on a 30,000 square foot expansion and a state-of-the-art piece of equipment that is almost 3 stories high and can process recyclables faster than any other facility not just in Connecticut, but the whole northeast!

Two other items mentioned in Section 6 a REALLY concern me. Those are food scraps and food processing residues. A Berlin firm, Bright Feeds, has just spent millions of dollars constructing a brand new building and equipment to not just take these items, but turn them into animal feed. This firm has and continues to receive support from DEEP! Their revolutionary technology and process can change the way our entire state handles food waste with a wonderful end result – the creation of usable and vital animal feed.

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I am the first to admit that curbside recycling is not the answer to all items. There are some where we should look for creative answers including storage batteries, waste oil, mattresses and technology (TVs, computers and the like). Instead of creating a new system and Authority, we should be finding ways to help the private sector to invest in green technology, which then creates green careers.

Let's not take a step backward by turning our backs on the private sector, who are by their nature, problem-solvers. I work with amazing and creative entrepreneurs every day, and I would encourage you to engage YOUR private sector and municipal partners who have been working with waste in its many forms for decades instead of creating an unnecessary and overly complex system through Bill 6664.

I would ask that you shelve this bill and work closely with the private sector to see firsthand what investments they have made and plan to make in the near future to better handle the "hole" left by MIRA.

Let's not cut out the heart of the solution by creating new things that not only leave the private sector out of this vitally important discussion, but pass a bill that is likely to harm these partners including causing job loss, empty buildings and more right within your districts.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of my thoughts on Governor's Bill 6664.

Sincerely,



Christopher D. Edge
Economic Development Director
Town of Berlin

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